RECONCILING A FIXED RELIGION WITH A DYNAMIC WORLD: CONSTRUCTING CONTEMPORARY APPLIED ISLAMIC STUDIES IN ISLAMIC HIGHER EDUCATION IN INDONESIA

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A. Introduction

To assume that we are living in a secularized world is to make a false assumption. The world today, is as fervently religious as it ever was, and in some places more so than ever. It is no exaggeration to say that, in today's day and age, religion is one of the most powerful and pervasive forces on earth. Religions have been powerful forces throughout history in any country, some times working for good and sometimes working to destroy. They have inspired some of the greatest and noblest of acts; equally they have inspired some of the most ruthless brutality. They are central to much social and political history.

In the wake of the terrorist attacks, it is tempting to regard that religious persuasions are indisputably central factors in the escalation of evil and on the global scene. Many argue that religion is the chief source of the problem in the world today. Theologians and philosophers have long wrestled with question about the sources and manifestation of individual and corporate evil. The satisfactory answers to such questions are not easy, but the questions have taken on a singular urgency at the down of this millennium.

If, therefore, religion is "here to stay," what role does and can it play in an increasingly pluralizing and globalizing context?

We are engaged in the swift and systematic decreation of the planet we were born onto. Whether we will take the steps to preserve God's creation in as intact and integral a form as is still possible. Or whether we will watch as it unravels -- which is what we are doing so far. It is true that as some sense of our troubles has begun to spread, people have begun to respond. There have been books. Theologians and physicists have collaborated on new cosmologies and conferences by the hundreds and the thousands. Planetary threats caused by humans including climate change, habitat destruction, pollution, and species extinction is real, its consequences will hit the poor the hardest, and Religious moral convictions demand urgent response to the problem.

The essential message of Islam, which is also that of the other prophetic traditions, is that all human beings are called upon to transform the world and to create a just social order. This call begins with the individual Muslim who, rooted in the particularities of his or her own circumstances, must struggle to deepen his or her personal commitment to justice and the common good. Thus, according to Islamic

teaching, every believer lives under the moral imperative to act justly in his or her personal life and to cooperate with others who are equally committed to justice in order to build communities—be they as small as families or as large as nation states—which affirm the dignity of humanity and of the rest of the created order.

Although the "preferential option for the poor" has become the trademark of Catholic social teaching in Latin America and elsewhere, it must become the option exercised not only by the Catholic and other Christian churches, but it must become the option of all believers.

We know by recapitulating the basic facts about world hunger, that of a total of six billion human beings, one quarter lives below the international poverty line.[1] Such poverty has consequences, "worldwide, 34,000 children under age five die daily from hunger and preventable diseases."[2] "Two of five children in the developing world are stunted, one in three is underweight and one in ten is wasted."[3] Realizing the reality above, we have a sense not only of moral responsibility, but if we realize that the Almighty gave so much to us, in turn we must use that blessing to help the less privileged. Just believing in God and going through the ritual is not enough. One also has to be a good human being. When the believers are addressed in the Qur'an, it always says, "those who believe and do good deeds." In other word, a Muslim has a dual function, one toward God and the other toward fellow human being. Centered in God and self-critical, Muslims believe that although God had given them the Qur'an and the Prophet had exemplified its teachings, it was their responsibility to implement its message in the societies that they were creating.

The paper will discuss about the need for the applied Islamic studies that offer real correctives and solutions to those global threats which is crucial today. It is part of our struggle to react in an intellectually responsible fashion to the immediate events we face and the broader, more complex issues these days raised, as mentioned above. The attention is also will focus on the changing roles religion has or can play in politics and culture, especially in the moment of violent and difficult struggle.

B. Theoretical Frameworks

Indeed, the global resurgence of Islam since the seventies has been classified in the West under the monolithic category of religious fundamentalism. Following the collapse of the communist system, the West has viewed the phenomenon of Islamic revitalization primarily as a threat to its global interest. The subsequent stereotyping and demonization of Islam have continued to gain strength so that today Islam has become equated, in the West, with fanaticism, brutality, intolerance, violence, terrorism, despotism, violation of human rights, and obscurantism. The western media has only furthered these stereotypes.

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[1]World Bank: World Development Report 1999/2000, Oxford University Press 1999, see http://www.worldbank.org/wdr/2000/fullreport.html.

[2]U.S. action Plan on Food Security, at http://www.fas.usda.gov:80/icd/summit/usactplan.pdf; March 1999

[3]UN Food and Agricultural Organization, at http://www.fao.org/focus/e/sofi/child-e.htm.

Obviously, the monolithic framing of many Western observers lends to misunderstand Islam is due largely to their limited knowledge of its nature. While it may be true that secular bias, as Esposito believes,[4] has contributed to the failure of many non-Muslim scholars to understand Islam properly, the major pitfall lies in their ignorance of the fact that Islam is a *polyinterpretable*[5] religion.

What do I mean that Islam is *polyinterpretable*? Although Islam may appear to be monolithic, its form and expression vary from one Muslim individual to another and from group to group. Thus, there is no single interpretation for the Qur'an as the source of Islam. In addition, there is no concept of "church" in Islam and no one authority can issue a religious edict and expect it to be accepted universally by all Muslims. So how is *Islam,* especially *shari'a* here to be understood?

There are a number of factors which can influence the outcome of an individual Muslim's understanding of the *shari'a.* Sociological, cultural and intellectual circumstances, or what Arkoun describes as the *'aesthetics of reception'*, certainly contribute to the forms and substances of interpretation. The *'aesthetic of reception'* means, 'how a discourse, oral or written, is received by listeners or readers', especially, in the case of Islam and Muslims reception of the Qur'an. More specifically, it refers to the conditions of individual perception of each level of culture corresponding to a social group in every phase of historical development.[6]

Each Qur'anic verse produces an appropriate meaning according to the mode in which the interpreter understands it. According to Ibn 'Arabi,[7] each word of the Qur'an –not to mention its verses and chapters –has an indefinite number of meanings, all of which are intended by God. Proper recitation of the Qur'an opens up the reader to new meanings at every reading. "When meaning repeats itself for someone reciting the Qur'an, he has not recited it as it should be recited. This is proof of his ignorance"[8] And unless the text and its context are continually being reheard in

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[4]See,John L. Esposito, "Seculer Bias and Islamic Revivalism"in *The Chronicle of Higher Education*, May, 1993

[5]A lengtly socio-historical discussion on this issue is found in, among other, Marshall. G. S. Hodgson, *The Venture of Islam: Conscience and History in World Civilization,* vol. I-III, Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1974

[6]See, Arkoun, ' The Concept of Authority in Islamic Thought', in Klauss Ferdinand and Mehdi Mozaffari, eds., *Islam: State and Society*, London: Curzon Press, 1988, 58.

[7] Ibn al-'Arabi is a greatest Sufi Andalusia. He was born in Murcia, Andalusia, Spain on 17 Ramadan 560 H or July 28 1165. One of the great miracles of career of our Great Master was his book. Osman Yahia, in the two volumes on the biography of Ibn al-'Arabi and the classification of his writings, accounted that Ibn al-'Arabi might have written 700 books, short articles, and collections of his poetry which 400 of them are available. The *Meccan Revelation* (*Futuhat al-Makiyah)* itself contains 17, 000 of pages in Yahia's critical edition. The most scared by scholars is reading all *Meccan Revelation*, without mentioning others, either in the printed edition or manuscript. The problem has not been in the thickness of his book, but in its content which is difficult and demanding high understanding of Islamic knowledge. This help to understand why the Great Master (*Shaikh al-Akbar*), while his influence was world wide, but has been relatively forgotten by modern scholarships. He died in Damascus, 22 Rabi al-tsani 638 or November 1240.

[8] Futuhat Al-Makiyya, IV 367. 3

the ever new texture, one is really not hearing what the text means. Rereading the scriptural sources themselves with a new eye is necessary.

Thus, no single scripture trajectory of any teaching should be absolutized and allowed to absorb the others. The evolutionary process of interpretation that makes up the texts must continue today in the same manner in which it took place then, in continuity with what went before, preserving the past without embalming it, faithful to the past without being limited by it. We should be critically aware of the historical context in which Islam grew up when interpreting the doctrine. In other words, "faithfulness to principles cannot involve faithfulness to the historical model, because times change, societies and political and economic systems become more complex, and in every age it is in fact necessary to think of a model appropriate to each social and cultural reality."[9]

In hermeneutics, inspired by Paul Ricoeur and Gadamer (Gadamer, 1989), each in his ways, we also knew that reading text is not such a straightforward event. The text will disclose its meaning in interactive ways. Text means or produces meaning in many and different ways. In addition insight and enlightenment are provided in various contexts and by various peoples. Thus, everybody has his or her rights to understand the words he/she heard or read. He/she has his/her own reflection for the texts.

In the words of Iranian scholar, Abdolkarem Soroush, if the science of nature is a human endeavor to understand the nature, the same is the science of religion. It is a human endeavor to understand religion. All understanding assumes suppositions and entails "categorization," that is subsuming the particular under universal categories and concepts. Understanding religion is no exception. It is preceded by certain assumptions and principles which are necessary conditions for its intelligibility and interpretation. For human cognition is changeable, so too is humankind's cognition of its religion because cognition in any era generally depends on the prevailing state of science in that era. This is why faith is continually being elucidated in new ways. These new interpretations are adapted to suit the conditions in which the interpreting person lives. "All religions are new religions every morning. For religion do not exist up in the sky somewhere, elaborated, finished, and static; they exist in men's hearts," said W. C Smith. In the same manner, Muhammad Sahrur said that it is not sufficient that *taghayyuru al ahkam* is needed by *taghayyuru al-azman waal-amkinah* alone, but it is also by *taghayyuri Nudhumi al-ma'rifah.*[10]

Al-Ghazaly (d. 1111), known as *hujjat al-Islam*, asserts that sacred texts such as Qur'an and Hadith are open to interpretation on five different levels: (1) ontological-existential (*dhati*), (2) experiential (*hissi*), (3) conceptual (*khayali*), (4) intellectual (*'aqli*), and (5) metaphorical (*shabahi* or *majazi*)[11]. Thus, everyone who

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[9] Tariq Ramadan, *Western Muslims and the Future of Islam*, Oxford University Press, 2004, p. 36. In addition, says Ramadan, some religious commands related to the affairs of the world naturally take on the color of the culture of various countries: "the principle remains the same, but the ways of being faithful to them are diverse. So the concern should not be to dress as Prophet dressed but to dress according to the principles (of decency/politeness/morality/respectability, cleanness, simplicity, aesthetics, and modesty) that underlay his choice of clothes."

[10] See, Muhammed Sahrur, *Nahw Usulin Jadidah li Fiqh al-Islamy*

[11] See, Abu Hamid Al-Ghazali's *Faysal al-Tafriqa Bayna al-Islam wa al-Zandaqa.*

interprets a statement of the text in accordance with one of the above levels of analysis has deemed such statements to be true. And anyone who engages in such interpretation, as long as he observes the rules of hermeneutics should not be branded as an unbeliever.

Nevertheless, all interpretations of a sacred text are not of equal value. Some may be misguided or even completely wrong. However, wrong interpretations should not be suppressed as heresy. An interpretation is heretical only if it denies the truth of a sacred text on all five hermeneutical levels above. Epistemologically, the exegesis of a sacred text constitutes informed opinion (*zann*) and not absolute truth (*haqq*), thus no one may claim an exclusive right of interpretation and no single interpretation is definitive. This approach helps not only preserve alternative voices that keep the process of interpretation open-ended, its spirit conforms to the liberal ideal of freedom of speech by granting to jurists and theologians the right to be wrong. But it should be noted that the relativity of religious knowledge does not eliminate the possibility of discerning between "correct' or "incorrect" interpretation of religion. The Qur'an, after all, is God's Speech; it is the self-disclosure of His infinite Essence. Diverse interpretations of the Qur'an answer to the diverse modes in which God discloses himself to the book's readers. To use Ibn 'Arabi's term, "The Qur'an is an ocean without shore".[12]

Sharia, as a human construction, is changeable, and many of its rules and regulations are not applicable to present social problems. Thus, The ulama' should re-examine the *shari'a* rules and regulations to adapt them to present social conditions. It is better to review the social conditions pertinent to a particular rule, and, if its application is no longer suitable, it should be replaced by a new rule inspired by Islam.[13]

Earlier Islamic thinkers, like Ibn Taymiyah, recognized the necessity for change in view of changing circumstances, and it is for this reason that he came out with a doctrine that religious edicts can change according to changing times.[14] Even an orthodox thinker like him thought it necessary that *ahkam* (edicts) should change with the change in historical and sociological circumstances. Thus we can say that "in practice, the 'Way to faithfulness', teaches us that Islam rests on three sources: the Qur'an, the Sunna, and the state of the world, or of our society (al-waqi)."[15]

The above perspective is based on the fact that the Koran was revealed to the Prophet over a period of 23 years. Some verses, therefore, refer to specific events like the campaign at the time of the battle Badr, and specific acts of the Prophet, such as his marriage to Zaynab bint Jahsh. (Q 33: 37). Moreover, various Qur'anic prescriptions relate to the practices of pre-Islamic society and were in response to the social circumstances prevalent then, and these practices no longer have the same

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[12]Ibn al-'Arabi, *Futuhat al-Makiyya*, II, 581. 11

[13]See Tariq Ramadan, p. 37

[14]Cited by Ashgar Ali Engineer, Islam, status of Women and Social change, in *Islam and the modern age,* 1990, 21, 190

[15]Tariq Ramadan, 37

social implications. Over the centuries, Muslims societies have changed and now have new problems which require new Shari'a legislation.

If we carry this argument a little further we can say that while the Qur'an was undoubtedly revealed for the whole of mankind and for all times to come, it contained that which had significance for the Arabs to whom it was revealed in order to be acceptable to them in their place and time. To be acceptable to the people to whom it is revealed, scripture must have immediate relevance for them. One might say scripture is contextually determined by their history, cultures and traditions. One cannot therefore deduce from verses in the Qur'an in isolation from their historical context as constitution or as legal code. It is for this reason that the principle of *ijtihad*[16] was used right from the beginning. Ultimately, the denial of *ijtihad* means nothing less than the denial of Allah continuing, living solicitude and the mission of the Prophet as a mercy to the world.

C. Reconstructing Contemporary Islamic Studies

Before I apply this interpretive framework to the question of constructing the applied Islamic Studies above, it is crucial to stress here on the reconciliation between changes in the modern world with the immutability of religion.

Indeed, Islam is unchanging, and any attempt to reconstruct Islam is both futile and illusory. No need to change our religion, but to reconcile our understanding of religion with changes in the outside the world. Contrary to religion, religious knowledge is not divine by virtue of its divine subject matter. It is not religion; it is among many branches of human knowledge. It is a product of scholars engaged in the study of the unchanging core of Islamic texts. This religious knowledge changes and evolves over time, as more comprehensive understandings replace previous, more limited interpretation. It should be remembered, that all interpretations are bound by the era in which a religious scholar lives and by the degree of advancement of the human sciences in general and religious studies in specific within this era.

It is also impossible to studi the Qur'an without certain presupposition derived from outside the Qur'an, which determined by a scholar's intellectual worldview. Thus, any understanding of religion is time-bond, for religious knowledge is created by the application of the "knowledge of the day" to the study of the core religious text. Religion is eternal, and the relativity of religious knowledge does not entail the relativity of religion itself. The relativity of religious knowledge, however, does not eliminate the possibility of discerning between "correct' or "incorrect" interpretation of religion. The distinction between "correct" and "incorrect" interpretation falls on the scholarly community. Here, our concern is not on the correct or false interpretation, but with uncovering the means by which religious knowledge is formed and developed.

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[16]In general usage, the Arabic word *ijtihad* denotes the utmost effort, physical or mental, expended in a particular activity. In its technical legal connotation, it denotes the thorough exertion of the jurist's mental faculty in finding a solution for a case of law. See, Wael B. Hallaq, 'Ijtihad', in John L. Esposito, ed., *The Oxford Encyclopedia of the Modern Islamic World*, Vol. 2, New York: Oxford University Press, 1995, 178

It is for this reason that the study of Islam needs to be reconstructed to respond to contemporary issues, and in order Islam not to subvert. Thus, we need a conception of religion that accepts the inevitability of change in the human understanding of religion: the development and growth of religious knowledge (*marifat-i dini*). In addition, the problems facing Muslims as more pressing, thus, we need to attempt to prepare Muslims with the appropriate religious, political, intellectual, and moral habits to engage with modernity.

1. Establishing conditions necessary for the manifestation of the theory

In order to the theory above to manifest, we need to establish condition necessary to it. According to Soroush,[17] religious ideology is one of the primary obstacles to the growth of religious knowledge. Ideology here as a social and political instrument used to determine and direct public behavior. It "consists of a systematized and ordered school of thought . . . that situates itself as a guide to action . . . and acts as a determining factor in people's political, social, and moral positions. Accepting Islam as an ideology reduces the complexity of religion to a fixed ideological worldview. To transform religion into ideology is to throw it in a definitive, unchanging mold. This replaces religion with an ideological version of it. The use of religion as a political tool also subordinates the depth and complexity of religious understanding to the imperatives of a temporary political struggle.

Religious ideology also threatens both the proper pursuit of knowledge and the governance of society. Thus, conditions necessary for the manifestation of the theory above to move on into a new phase of Islamic Studies are:

a. It should be apparent to everyone that religious pluralism is a fact of life. Not only do we have to accept the existence of multiple religions, and multiple religious interpretations, but we must also acknowledge the nonreligious option as a significant and legitimate choice. In pluralistic modern societies, to assert the authority of particular "literal" interpretation amounts to a tyrannical assertion of power.
b. A new ranking of rational processes, which means maintaining constantly open the theoretical debate on the epistemological axiom and postulates commanding each implicitly or explicitly assumed hierarchy of approaches in every cognitive construction.
c. More and more Muslim scholars should be urged to contribute to the new approaches to the religious texts, by increasing the possibilities and places for the exchange and confrontation of thoughts, in order to make progress in what is bound to be a long-term enterprise with the ultimate goal of thinking, knowing, and acting.
d. The government should allow for contemporary society to come up with a way of speaking civilly about religion without staking authoritative claims that exclude certain parties from the conversation.
e. No allowance being made for the intellectual laziness of the jurists, cleric, scholars, politician, or whoever, who were generally happy simply to cite the

[17] See, Charles Kurzmann, ed., *Liberal Islam, A Sourcebook*, Oxford University Press, 2002

'condemnable propositions' already catalogued by certain scholars on certain problems.

f. In this world wide battles we have to fulminate against the phenomenon of 'the silence of the intellectual' and the treason of political and social scientists who continue to serve the national interests of their nations or their communities while they ascribe their scholarship to a scientific, objective, humanist, intellectually-driven endeavor.
g. A religious society has to resist the ascension of an ideological regime and resist being transformed into an ideological society.
h. Democratic government presupposes habits of thought that include the exercise of practical judgment, which in its collective and political form is called "common sense."
i. Preconditions for democratizing religious government is historicizing and energizing the religious understanding by underscoring the role of reason in it. By reason, I do not mean a form of isolated individual reason, but a collective reason arising from the kind of public participation and human experience that are available only through democratic methods. "The free societies are closer to the prophets than the totalitarian ones."
j. Changing the Habitus. The Habitus constitutes the manner of acting, not the contents of acting. Thus, we need to weight to habits of practical judgment than to formulating rules of behaviour. Before humans follow rules and reasons, they act via mimesis, after exemplars of virtue.
k. A religious government must be a just government and that justice is a term independent of religion. Justice includes a conception of humanity, of what is means to be human and of what rights humans enjoy.
l. This concept must accord with religion but it cannot be defined on the basis of the religious text alone.

Thus, for religious knowledge to evolve properly, besides the necessary conditions above, universities (PTAIN) also should meet certain conditions:

- It is important that we have to clarify the difference between the internal and external aspects of religion, between religious experience and the cumulative traditions, and between the prescriptive and descriptive approaches to religion. It is also important to explain and to distinguish between the many voices that speak in the name of Islam.
- Analysis of traditional religious texts based on the methods and findings of contemporary natural and philosophical sciences should be encouraged.
- University (PTAIN) student should be free to raise deep and wide-ranging questions about these texts.
- The human nature of religious knowledge should be stressed, and students and teachers alike should set no boundaries in the study of this knowledge. Religion should not be confused with religious knowledge, and respect and sanctity of the former should not be bestowed on the latter.
- The academic study of religion should offer tools that can help create anew civil discourse about Islam.
- Much of the information on Islam is to be accessible to the general public and is not produced in limited quantities and in hard-to-find journal. It also should be expressed in more accessible fashion.

- Islamic tradition is so poorly understood, thus it is important to establish some basic terms that are used both to describe the religion from without and to elaborate on it from within.

2. Proposed material (in the Syllabi) for Contemporary Applied Islamic Studies.

A distinguished Catholic theologian Friedrich von Huegel (1852-1925) opines that all living religions embody a unity of three elements: the historical-institutional which addresses to mind and memory, the intellectual or analytic speculative, which is associates with reason and the mystical, intuitive-emotional which directs to the will and the action of love.[18] In almost the same manner, the scholar of Jewish mysticism, Gershom Scholem, says that religion develops in three stages, mythical, institutional and mystical.[19] These three elements have to be in a mutual and harmonious relationship in order for religion to flourish. Thus, as Scholem mentions, when one aspect is ignored in the expense of the other, or when an unbalance of the application of these aspect occurred, conflict will be unavoidable.

In accordance with the three elements of religion described above, the proposed syllabi for contemporary applied Islamic Studies are written below:

a. Qur'anic Studies (humanization of religion)

Like the study of nature, we know now that observation does not stand alone – it is theory-laden, mixed with presuppositions. In the same way, texts – including religious texts – do not stand alone. They do not carry their meaning on their shoulders. They have to be interpreted, in their context, with allowance made for their presuppositions (philosophical, historical, linguistic, sociological, etc.) which are time-bound and have to be revised. Religious knowledge is subject to continuous change, since 'revelation' is heard only through interpreters with their presuppositions – some judged in the course of time to be more right, others more wrong.

To speak in this way is to risk accusations of betraying the sacred text and undermining the certitude of faith. Revelation may be divine, but all the interpretation of it is human. This is not to desacralise the sacred or to secularize the religion, it is the simple and at the same time the subtle instance of naturalization of the supernatural, or the manifestation of the supernatural as and in the natural.

In this case we can introduce a new problematisation of revelation, with a new program aimed at opening a new field for comparative study of revelation as an historical, linguistic, cultural, and anthropological articulation of thought common to the three revealed religion.

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[18] Cited by Dorothee Soelle, *The Silent Cry, Mysticism and Resistance* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2001), 1.

[19] See, Gershom Scholem, *Zur Kabbala und ihrer Symbolik.* translated by Ralph Manheim (New York : Schocken Books, 1965).

By doing this we reverse the approach of Revelation from the dogmatic theological systems to the critical, deconstructive analysis of social sciences applied to the rich topic of religious phenomena. But it does not mean that theology should be discarded as an intellectual endeavour coupled with the quest for spiritual meaning in the light of human experiences of the divine.

b. **Contextual Theology.**

For centuries, theologies have been developed as idealistic, abstract, but dogmatically, politically normative systems, outside and often contrary to the historical, sociological, biological and cosmological evidence. With the discoveries made by using scientific reasoning, theologians have been obliged to reinterpret their dogmatic propositions. For this endeavour we need the foundational posture of religious reasoning, that is "the search for ontological, spiritual and intellectual foundations upon which to base systems of belief, knowledge and interpretation, the normative law supposedly derived and currently taught as the genuine expression of 'the true religion.'"[20]

In order not for theology becomes a merely speculative, the discussion should be focused on for example, how we talk about God in the condition where people live in poverty. The concept of justice (*adl*), stands second only to the concept of realizing the oneness of God (*tawhid*) as one of the most elemental teachings of the Qur'an. Quranically speaking, Islam itself is about working toward justice in every relationship in which the human being finds her or himself: in relationship with the divine Creator, in relationship with each other, and in relationship with all of the created order of which we human beings are an integral part. In addition, the challenge to be authentically Muslim in today's world is that the establishment of justice in the inter-human realm and between human beings and the environment necessitates the universal establishment of human rights—both political and economic—and universal care for the earth.

The ultimate point around which the call of the Prophet revolved was the concept of *tawhid*, from the root *w-h-d*, which means 'to be alone', 'one', 'an integrated unity'. Commitment to *tawhid* constituted 'faith in God, the Solitary without a partner, the Embodiment of unity, the One whose Unity is unceasing and with whom there is none.'[21] As the foundation of the Islamic worldview, *Tawhid* implies that the universe and all that is in it forms an integral whole which reflects the uncompromised unity and wholeness of God. Instead of dividing life into unrelated components such as the physical and the spiritual, the here-and-now and the hereafter, the doctrine of *tawhid* teaches the profound interconnectedness of it all as the created order of the one divinity. According to the Iranian sociologist of Islam, Ali Shari`ati, *tawhid* signifies the integration of this world and the hereafter, the natural and supernatural,

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[20] Mohammed Arkoun, *Islam: To Reform or to Subvert?* London: Saqi Essentials, 2006, 44

[21] Ibn Manzur, *Lisan al-'Arab*, 6vols., Cairo: Dar al-Kitab al-Masri, n. d. 6, 4761

substance and meaning, spirit and body.[22] Thus, *tawhid* constitutes a special view of the world that shows clearly a universal unity in existence, a unity between three separate hypostases: God, nature, and the human being. The unity inheres not in their essence, but rather in their origin– no one is separate from the other, no one is foreign to the other, no one is opposed to the other.[23] This idea of the one Almighty God carries with it the idea of the one human family whose members are equal in their call to serve God and one another. Thus, a strong sense of the brotherhood and sisterhood of all humanity and their equal status in the eyes of God is also another basic teaching of Islam.

It is thus understood that the message based on the belief in one Almighty and Merciful God, in the brotherhood and sisterhood of all humanity was the message of liberation and justice, not only for the weak and the downtrodden, but also for those who are loaded with money. Islam came to liberate both, one from the pressure and hardship of poverty and the other from the evils which follow the love of money.

In the Qur'an, this preferential option for the poor is reflected in the particularized identification of God Himself with the oppressed, the lifestyles and methodology of all the Abrahamic prophets, the quranic condemnation of the powerful and the accumulation of wealth, and the Qur'an's message of liberation to women and slaves. Furthermore, there are a number of verses which link faith and religion, on the one hand, with humanism and a sense of socio-economic justice, on the other. A denial of these is linked with a rejection of justice, compassion and sharing (107: 1-3, 104; 22: 45). "There is a very close connection between our relationship to God and our relationship to our neighbor,"[24] and "the more deeply human we are, the more easily we can be touched by God."[25] And "the living God is one who fosters life and sides with those who struggle for food, freedom, dignity and community against all systems of death and subjugation."[26]

c. Maqashid al-Shari'a as a philosophy of Islamic Law.

In Islamic thought, the fundamental exercise above has persisted to the two central disciplines of *ushul al-din* and *ushul al-fiqh,* which have developed a systematic methodology to establish a divine origins, the textual sources and meaningful roots on which theological propositions and legalistic norms have to be based. Unfortunately what is called the Divine Law (*Shari'a*), has been confused with the regulations collected in the form of bodies of law (*majmu'at*

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[22]Ali Shariati, "The Worldview of Tauhid," in *On the Sociology of Islam*, tr. from Persian by Hamid Algar, Berkeley: Mizan press, 1979, 82

[23]Shariati, "The World view of Tauhid,", 83

[24]Donal Dorr, *Option for the Poor, A Hundred Years of Catholic Social Teaching*, New York: Maryknoll, Orbis Books, 1992, 237

[25]Dorr, *Spirituality and Justice*, 22

[26]Samuel Rayan, "Irruption of the Poor: Challenge to Theology," in Leonardo Boff and Virgil Elizondo, eds.. *Option for the Poor*, 106

fiqhiyya), resulting in the present fundamentalist discourse coupled with political activism of the so-called fundamentalist movements.

It is for this reason that we need to distinguish between fundamentalist vision and discursive practice and the foundationalist standpoint of reason looking for ontological origins, theoretical principles and coherent reasoning on which to base beliefs, ethical values, the law and 'scientific' knowledge.

Thus, the proposed material for the universities' course is that of *ushul al-fiqh* and not *majmu'at fiqhiyya*. By learning ushul al-fiqh, the student is encouraged to find new *majmu'at fiqhiyya* appropriate to their contextual needs. Current issues such as climate change, human rights, gender, poverty, terrorism, stem cells, cloning and others can be seen in religious perspective in collaboration with other social and physical scientists.

d. Ethic and life in the world

Books that survey the Islamic faith, which contains an overview of basic religious practices and beliefs, should not outlines these religious requirements in the abstract, but also must make reference either to multiple school of thoughts or to the history of Islamic religious practice in different regions. Thus, both prescriptive teaching and descriptive interpretation is offered.

In this course the topic can include, the sources of Islamic Ethics, Islam and the State, Gender and the question of veiling, Islam and science, and religion and ecology, including climate change.

e. Ordinary Mysticism/Sufism

Thus far there have been complaints that Sufism or mysticism in general teaches withdrawal from the world or quietism. That mysticism is out of touch with the concern of every man and woman, with the practical world, and with the struggle for justice. The course proposed for a new mysticism or a mystic in the world will shatter the complaint. It will teach new mysticism, called 'activist mysticism of dynamized silence'.

It will show that mysticism is not quietism. Man can be concerned with many things while still preserving the one thing necessary. It also means that *God could be found not only by withdrawal from the world.*

Islam has never allowed contemplative and active lives to become divorced from each other; the prophetic tradition says, 'an hour of meditation is better than sixty years of act of worship', but the Arabic proverb says, 'knowledge (contemplation) without action is like a tree without fruit'. In Islamic history, outstanding Sufis have been known to be scholars, artists, teachers, and even administrators and rulers.

When the vast majority of people have no choice but to seek and find God in the busy world, it is certainly necessary to learn from concept of contemplation and action above. They are sisters of one another, complete

each other, and they are the real community. Contemplation and action's symbol give hope and courage to the majority of persons who live in the world, that they can have a life of deep prayer and intense activity, or in Thomas Merton's words, 'good monks do not of themselves hinder the life of prayer'. No one can live the contemplative life without break; harmony of contemplation and action is needed. And the mystic represents the embodiment, the typical and ideal example, and finest fruits of tradition which bring the sacred and the profane (secular) together. The sacred and the profane are not mutually exclusive realism. This kind of mysticism addresses our need to sense the sacred within the profane and thus, encourages us to develop a spirituality that is both in and for the world.

Especially for the department of education (*Tarbiah*), the biggest department in UIN and the department of Mission (*Dakwah*), both have a very crucial role in spreading the information for the community of believers. Thus, a mutual and harmonious relationship between three elements of religion should be maintained and the proposed material described above should be their ultimate concern.

3. Cooperation or collaboration between disciplines

Religious knowledge depends on other forms of knowledge. The theory of expansion and contraction of religious interpretation moves on three levels: kalam (Islamic theology), usul (applied logic in religious jurisprudence), and irfan (esoteric knowledge, sufism). Irfan is both ineffable knowledge as well as the basis for his hermeneutic and dialogic theory. It provides a mystical viewpoint beyond individual religions.

The syllabi for Contemporary Islamic studies proposed above will encourage collaborative efforts from every scholar from every discipline, above all, collaborative efforts between social or physical scientists and religious scholars. The syllabi also incorporate notions of human rights and democracy, not to mention the latest insights of biology, physics, and other physical sciences.

As we knew, earlier revivalists and sages did not countenance the eclipse of truth of religion behind a parade of rituals, nor did they appreciate a religion restricted to the strictures of appearance.

D, Concluding remark

Today, if religion (consequently, the study of religion, especially in this case, Islamic studies) has to be meaningful, closely integrated with human destiny, both in mundane and sublime sense, it will have to be liberated from sterile ritual and theological rationalization. I do not in position to say that ritual is not important. I would like to throw some light here on fundamental values which make human beings really religious in spirit. If one faithfully performs one's religious rituals but violates these fundamental values or ignores them, one cannot be said to have fulfilled one's

religious obligations. This is why God condemned people who perform *shalat* (worship) but neglected the needy (107: 1- 7). A truly religious person is more conscious of these fundamental values rather than of rituals. It is also to be noted that rituals can be performed without hurting ones selfish interests but values demand great sacrifice from us. No wonder then we stress rituals more than the values. In any case one has to keep ones selfish desires under control, if one wishes to practice these values.

In fact rituals in symbolic sense are instruments for realising these values. But these rituals become ends in themselves and hence religion becomes dogmatic, static and indifferent to human suffering and in some cases even cause of suffering.

It is the time to realize and understand the meaning of experience faith as solidarity with the oppressed and marginalized in a struggle for liberation. *Iman* (belief) is an "active quality, one that commits the person and by which he (or she) is caught up into a dynamic relationship with his (or her) fellows. It is the ability to see the transcendent, and to respond to it, to hear God's voice and to act accordingly."[27] And it is in this way that all religions can cooperate.

In today's condition the primacy of liberative praxises over verbal affirmations of dogma is needed because, as Rida said, "there is no right greater than justice and no wrong worse than tyranny."[28] Thus, during the period of enslavement in Egypt, for example, Moses' prophetic responsibility was essentially to act in solidarity with the Israelites rather than preaching to them. We cannot ask everybody to be a Muslim, or other religions before we act.

Just as the Qur'an recognizes the messengers beyond any religion's exclusive list[29] it is also recognizes those who undergo the suffering of messengers in their attempt to bring humanity out of corruption and bloodshed, those who want to spread justice and compassion among us. Thus, who call for justice are recognized in the class of messengers, for they are faced with the same call to mission the most sacred recognized by the Qur'an.[30] Religion should no longer stays in the realm of preaching, but through direct practical observation of reality.

Yogyakarta, 10 Juli 2010

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[27]Cantwell Smith, *The Meaning and End of Religion*, New York: Mentor Books, 1991, 112

[28]Muhammad Rashid Rida, *Tafsir al-Manar*, Beirut: Dar al-Ma'arif, 12 vols., 1980, 4, 45, cited by Esack, *Qur'an, Liberation and Pluralism*, 198

[29]The Qur'an 40: 78; 10: 47; 34: 24

[30]The Qur'an 57: 25